

John 8:55

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

Analysis

Yet ye have not known him; but I know him—Jesus exposes their ignorance of God despite religious profession. "Ye have not known" (οὐκ ἐγνώκατε αὐτόν/ouk egnōkate auton) uses the perfect tense, indicating settled state: they remain in ignorance. "Known" (γινώσκω/ginōskō) means intimate, experiential knowledge, not mere information. They knew about God from Scripture but didn't know God personally—the difference between reading a love letter and loving the author.

"But I know him" (ἐγὼ οἶδα αὐτόν/egō oida auton)—the emphatic "I" contrasts Jesus's knowledge with their ignorance. Jesus uses oida, indicating absolute, intuitive knowledge, not ginōskō. Christ's knowledge of the Father is complete, eternal, essential (10:15, 17:25). As the eternal Son, He knows the Father as the Father knows Him—perfect mutual knowledge within the Trinity.

And if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you—Jesus refuses the option they presented (v.53). If He denied knowing God to placate them, He'd become "a liar" (ψεύστης/pseustēs), "like unto you" (ὅμοιος ὑμῶν/ homoios hymōn). They're liars because they claim to know God while rejecting God's Son. Jesus won't join their hypocrisy by denying truth for acceptance.

But I know him, and keep his saying (ἀλλὰ οἶδα αὐτὸν καὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ τηρῶ/alla oida auton kai ton logon autou tērō)—Jesus's knowledge bears fruit in perfect obedience. "Keep" (τηρῶ/tērō) means to guard, observe, obey carefully.

Jesus perfectly keeps the Father's word, the very standard He applies to believers (v.51). His life vindicates His claims.

Historical Context

This confrontation recalls Jeremiah 9:23-24: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD." The religious leaders gloried in heritage ("we have Abraham," v.53), knowledge ("we know," v.52), and position—but didn't know God.

Jesus's knowledge of the Father and perfect obedience fulfills Israel's calling. Israel was to be God's son (Exodus 4:22), displaying His character to nations. But Israel failed repeatedly. Jesus, as true Israel (Matthew 2:15), perfectly knows and obeys the Father, accomplishing what Israel couldn't.

The phrase "I shall be a liar like unto you" is shockingly direct. Jesus doesn't soften truth for diplomacy. This prefigures His "woes" against scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23), exposing religious hypocrisy. Truth-telling, even when offensive, demonstrates love—warning the self-deceived of their danger.

Early Christians, persecuted by religious authorities, took comfort: those authorities didn't truly know God despite claims and credentials. True knowledge of God manifests in receiving God's Son (1 John 2:23, 4:7-8). Theological orthodoxy without Christ is ignorance, however learned it appears.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What's the difference between knowing about God and knowing God personally, and how do we examine which we possess?
2. How does Jesus's linking knowledge of God with obedience ("keep his saying") challenge merely intellectual faith?
3. When does 'speaking the truth in love' require direct confrontation of religious hypocrisy, following Jesus's example here?

Interlinear Text

καὶ οὐκ ἐγνώκατε αὐτοῦ ἐγὼ δὲ οἶδα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐὰν
Yet not known him I but I know him Yet if
G2532 G3756 G1097 G846 G1473 G1161 G1492 G846 G2532 G1437

εἴπω ὅτι οὐκ οἶδα αὐτοῦ ἔσομαι ὅμοιος ὑμῶν,
I should say not I know him I shall be like unto you
G2036 G3754 G3756 G1492 G846 G2071 G3664 G5216

ψεύστης· ἀλλ' οἶδα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ τηρῶ
a liar but I know him Yet saying him keep
G5583 G235 G1492 G846 G2532 G3588 G3056 G846 G5083

Additional Cross-References

John 8:19 (Parallel theme): Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

John 8:44 (Parallel theme): Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Revelation 3:9 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Matthew 11:27 (Parallel theme): All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

John 8:51 (Parallel theme): Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

1 John 5:10 (Parallel theme): He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

John 15:21 (Parallel theme): But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

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